



March 11, 2003

The Honorable John D. Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Opposition to President Bush's Medicaid Plan

Dear Representative Dingell:

The National Women's Law Center strongly opposes President Bush's plan to block grant federal funds for Medicaid. Medicaid plays a critical role in providing health coverage for millions of low-income women and their families. In fact, 70% of Medicaid beneficiaries ages 15 and older are women. Capping federal funds for these crucial services for low-income women and their families is not in the country's best interest. We urge you to reject this plan.

Medicaid provides needed health care coverage to women at all stages of their lives. It is the largest insurer of single mothers and covers almost 40 percent of this population. Nationally, Medicaid insures almost a quarter of all low-income women. Who are these women? They are women on cash assistance who need health insurance as a support as they strive to achieve self-sufficiency. They are women who no longer receive cash assistance and are able to retain Medicaid for a finite period of time. A 1999 survey found that 85 percent of women who left welfare for work were employed at jobs that paid less than \$10 per hour where the provision of employer sponsored coverage is very unlikely. They are low-wage workers who get Medicaid coverage, or may, at a minimum, get peace of mind by getting coverage for their children. They are pregnant women. Medicaid finances approximately one-third of all births in the United States. They are low-income seniors and women with disabilities who get needed services including long-term care. Medicaid is the largest payer of nursing home care, covering almost half of all nursing home care nationwide.

A cap on federal funds will have a devastating effect on Medicaid all over the country. Already, because of difficult economic times, states are cutting back on eligibility standards and services and raising cost sharing requirements. Almost every state has planned or implemented Medicaid cuts in FY 2003. Many of these cutbacks are already causing significant difficulty for women and their families. States need more money for their Medicaid program, not less. If the Bush plan to cap federal cuts goes into effect, states will face even harder choices. They will have to decide, for example, between cutting eligibility for working families who have no access to health care coverage or eligibility for the elderly and disabled who cannot survive without long-term care.

In light of the overwhelming harm the Bush plan will inflict on women all over the country, we call upon you to send a loud and clear message that this plan to cap federal funds for Medicaid is unacceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marcia Greenberger".

Marcia D. Greenberger
Co-President